

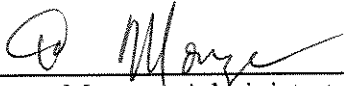


Outreach and Partnership Plan for Montana State Parks


October 2005
Visitor Services Bureau
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Outreach and Partnership Plan for Montana State Parks

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Executive Summary	2
II. Mission and Vision	3
III. Situational Analysis	4
A. Market Summary	4
1. Market Demographics	4
2. National Travel Trends	5
B. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats	6
C. Services	7
D. Historical Marketing Efforts	8
IV. Marketing Strategy	9
A. Mission.....	9
B. Target Audiences	9
C. Message and Guiding Principles	10
D. Goals and Objectives	10
E. Action Items	15
F. Budget.....	18
G. Review and Revision of the Plan	18
V. Conclusion	18
VI. Appendix.....	19

I. Executive Summary

This plan outlines steps to strengthen the connections between state parks, park users, businesses, and communities. Montana State Parks needs to convey the parks' value and benefits so that the public becomes increasingly connected to these places and so that support grows for their continued preservation. To this end, the plan has established the following goals:

- 1) Build identity and increase awareness of state parks and the recreation grants programs
- 2) Strengthen and enhance customer service
- 3) Balance the quality and type of visitor experiences with long-term visitor impact on the natural and cultural resources
- 4) Develop strategies to direct visitors to underused parks and to increase park visitation at off-peak times
- 5) Develop strategic partnerships with organizations and communities
- 6) Increase the flow of information and educational stories to targeted audiences
- 7) Obtain data from park users and non-users to identify opportunities for service and facility improvements and targeted marketing.

These goals derive from recommendations developed by the nine-member State Parks Futures II Committee. Governor Judy Martz appointed that committee in October 2001 to review the operations, structure, and management of state parks and make specific recommendations for improvement of the state park system. The committee developed its report, titled "Report and Recommendations for the Montana State Park System," with a great deal of public input, and the process included a three-month comment period, July 2002 through September 2002.

"Report and Recommendations for the Montana State Park System" contained four items related to marketing, communication and partnership development. Among its other recommendations (included in the appendix) was the formation of a marketing plan. Hence this document.

In addition, this plan takes its lead from "2020 Vision for Montana State Parks," the long range plan developed in 1998. The Parks Division created that document in a process that also included extensive public input. The "Fish, Wildlife and Parks Strategic Plan" (November 2004) also provides a foundation for this plan. Together, these planning documents have established the direction for the state parks system as further described in "Section II. Mission and Vision." The plan is an extension of these plans, outlining the

specific steps necessary to accomplish the marketing, communications and partnership components recommended in these earlier reports.

Development of this plan began in October 2004. The Parks Division held a series of public meetings in October and November to gather input. The public comment period for the draft plan ran from July 18, 2005, to August 19, 2005. Parks received written comments, ranging from full support of the plan to scrapping the plan altogether. Parks carefully considered all comments and this final plan reflects changes made in response to the input the Parks Division received on earlier drafts.

The word “marketing” is often perceived as advertising or selling, however these are only two elements of the complex marketing process. Marketing involves examining the particular wants and needs of the people that use one’s services, then developing ways to satisfy those desires while maintaining the integrity and mission of the organization.

Based on market research and analysis, strategic decisions can be made to implement improvements to the State Parks system on many levels and not simply to increase visitation.

II. Mission and Vision

The mission of Montana State Parks is three-fold:

- Conserve a representative diversity of the state’s natural, cultural and recreational amenities;
- Provide resource education and interpretation; and
- Help facilitate sustainable economic development through tourism.

The “Report and Recommendations for the Montana State Park System,” the “2020 Vision for Montana State Parks” and the “Fish, Wildlife & Parks Six-Year Plan” have further defined the direction and vision for state parks. Through each of these planning processes emerged five common desirable outcomes:

- 1) A parks program where natural, historical/cultural, and recreational resources are enhanced and protected in perpetuity.
- 2) A parks program where visitor expectations are met or exceeded due to the quality of the natural and historical/cultural resources, recreational opportunities, facilities, programs, and staff.
- 3) A parks program that provides outstanding education and interpretation of Montana’s natural, historical, cultural, and recreational resources and the conservation issues that face them.

- 4) A parks program that contributes to Montana's growing tourism industry and general economic stability in a manner that is sustainable for the system's key resources.
- 5) A recreational grants program that adds to Montanans' quality of life by providing funds for outdoor recreational facilities, infrastructure, and improvements.

This plan recognizes these desired outcomes and outlines strategies to market the parks in ways consistent with this vision.

III. Situational Analysis

To accomplish the goals of this plan requires an understanding of current use, travel trends, and an analysis of the parks' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It also requires an understanding of the services currently offered by the parks and the parks' historic marketing effort. This section summarizes that material.

The data presented indicates that healthy market segments exist to support Montana State Parks. It also suggests those areas of opportunities where parks could improve services. Both will be addressed in Section IV of this document.

A. Market Summary

1. Market Demographics

The 2004 Montana State Parks Visitation Report indicates that Montana State Parks served 1.65 million visitors in 2004, the highest number since 1995.¹ Elimination of resident day use fees in 2004 partly explains this increase.

Montana residents visit the parks far more frequently than tourists. Visitation statistics show that in 2004 Montanans comprised 73% of park visitors. Residents comprise 85% of the visitors to water-based sites while visitors to cultural and historic sites are split at around 57% residents and 43% non-residents.²

Day users comprise 86% of the visitors to state parks.³

Campers and day-trippers use parks with campgrounds at varying rates, depending on the park. Campground occupancy rates vary widely. During peak season, some campgrounds, such as Tongue River Reservoir and Flathead Lake sites, are frequently at or near capacity. Others, like Lewis and Clark Caverns and Makoshika, typically have sites available.

¹ 2004 State Parks Visitation Report.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Statewide Trends Affecting Visitation

Overall, Montana's population is increasing; however, it is not increasing equally across the state. The greatest population expansion is in the west, from Bozeman north through the Flathead Valley. For example, from 1990 to 2000 Flathead County's population grew at 25.8%. In contrast, twenty-two counties in eastern Montana lost population in the last decade while the central portion of the state remained stagnant or experienced growth of 6% or less.⁴

While in-migration accounts for some of this trend, the overall population increase represents people moving to Montana from other states, providing a whole new set of people ready to learn about Montana heritage, state parks, and recreational opportunities.

The changing face of Montana also impacts the way people use the resources, and this poses unique challenges for resource managers. In the western part of the state, with its growing population, there are overuse issues and growing social conflicts among different types of users. Shrinking public recreation access, resulting from real estate development, makes parks and other public land even more desirable by all user groups.

2. National Travel Trends⁵

Rather than long vacations, Americans are taking multiple mini-vacations each year. These are generally 3 to 4 days in length. This means travelers want to pack more activities into a shorter period.

Today's visitors want immersive experiences that allow them to "do it, see it, and ask about it."⁶ Travelers increasingly value interpretive programming and signs, special events, and amenities that help them engage in activities (e.g., boat and bicycle rentals, warming huts for ice skating, trail systems).

Americans are placing an increased emphasis on family and are seeking vacation destinations with activities designed and packaged for kids. Tourism studies show that children influence more than half of all family travel decisions made by their parents. In consequence, it has become increasingly important to develop better experiences for children and produce more communications directed toward them.

"Togetherness" is a new trend in the tourism industry. Groups composed of multiple families or couples are vacationing collectively. This travel segment is looking for reserve-able group facilities, vacation packages, and value-added activities.

⁴ U.S. Census 2000, www.census.gov/main/www/cen2000.html

⁵ Information on national travel trends comes from Travel Industry Association, Domestic Travel Market Report, 2004 and 2003 editions, www.tia.org/Travel/traveltrends.asp

⁶ Travel Industry Association, Domestic Travel Market Report, 2004 Edition, www.tia.org/Travel/traveltrends.asp

Empty nesters are another growing market. Empty nesters frequently travel during off-peak times and characteristically desire comfort (e.g., RV hookups and flush toilets) and educational opportunities.

The “soft adventure market” is one of today’s fastest-growing travel demographics. This market now includes 92 million Americans who enjoy RV and tent camping, boating, wildlife viewing, fishing, and other outdoor family fun.

Festivals and fairs have become increasingly popular ways for travelers to experience new destinations and cultures. Four in ten (41%) U.S. adult travelers attended a festival and/or fair during a trip in 2002.

Shopping is the most popular trip activity for U.S. adult travelers, with 63% of adult travelers naming shopping as an activity they engaged in during a trip.

Many of today’s travelers also desire experiences tailored to their needs for one-stop vacation shopping. They are attracted to packages that include a theme, a driving tour, special events, places to stay, local color, great food, and shopping for items to commemorate the experience.

B. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis

To determine how national and statewide travel trends affect visitation levels at state parks, the Visitor Services Bureau conducted SWOT analysis meetings throughout the state with Fish, Wildlife & Parks staff, the tourism industry, and others with a vested interest in state parks. For additional input, staff sent questionnaires to seasonal parks employees and analyzed over 5,000 comment cards returned by visitors in 2004. Several key themes emerged from these sources; most significantly, lack of identity and awareness surfaced as the major issue for both state parks and the recreation grant programs. A more detailed analysis of the results is presented in the chart below.

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Parks has friendly, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic frontline staff. Visitor comment cards rated staff 4.7 on a 1-to-5 scale. •Existing interpretation and educational opportunities greatly add to a positive visitor experience. •The parks are unique and authentic and offer diverse scenic beauty. •The quality and variety of outdoor recreational opportunities are a strength. •Day use areas are a good value and affordable to a wide range of visitors. •Parks with on-site staff presence are perceived as safe places to visit. 	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •There is a lack of identity and awareness—parks is often confused with other public agencies. •There is a lack of developed facilities such as campsite hook ups, showers, and food concessions. •There is a shortage of directional and interpretive signage. •Parks lack group sites. •There is a shortage of interpretative staff. •There is no camping reservations system. •There is a lack of “packaging” with other tourism facilities. •Parks lacks staff for fishing access site maintenance. •Parks’ website is not user friendly. •The diversity of parks often confuses the public about what kind of experience to expect.
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Opportunities exist to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •create a clear identity and consistent look and message. •create themed packages with local communities and other attractions. •form strategic partnerships with those who share a common vision. •redesign and enhance the parks web site. •nurture support groups. •attract more group use. •add more interpretive programming and signs. •add amenities and activities to enhance visitor experience. 	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Rising price of gasoline may limit travel. •Competing opportunities, which can be anything from video games to theme parks, keep people from the parks. •Poor weather and natural events, such as fire and drought, reduce use.

C. Services

The fifty Montana state parks are divided into three types: natural, cultural/historical, and water-based recreation. The facilities and services offered at these sites are diverse. Seven parks have staffed visitor centers and eighteen parks offer camping. Other overnight accommodations include three cabins, three yurts, and five tipis.

Parks' merchandise is currently limited to denim shirts, caps, mugs, pins, three videos, and one book, as well as specific site items in places such as Bannack, Makoshika, Chief Plenty Coups, and Ulm Pishkun. Value-added activities include a variety of guided tours and hikes, field trip opportunities for students, interpretive programs, and limited recreation equipment rental. Concessionaires at Tongue River, Caverns, and Hell Creek offer limited groceries, food items, beverages, souvenirs, and supplies.

Comparing Montana's state parks to those in eighteen other western states shows that Montana parks offer significantly fewer services and value-added activities than those in other western states. Only three other states (Nevada, Wyoming and Alaska) do not offer electrical or sewer hookups at their state park campsites. Only one other state, Nevada, does not have a reservation system for any state park campsites.

Unlike in Montana, most state park systems offer a wide variety of value-added activities such as horseback rides, recreational equipment rentals, food and beverage services, recreational skills instruction, camp stores, horseshoe pits, volleyball courts, cross country ski trails, and more. Some systems offer hostels, golf courses, and full-service lodges. The goal for Montana State Parks is to balance amenities that can enhance the visitor experience with a level of development that current and future visitation levels can support while still protecting the resources.

D. Historical Marketing Efforts

Historically, Montana State Parks has not approached marketing as a comprehensive program. Past efforts, while well intentioned, have been sporadic and reactive with no dedicated funding or trained staff to develop a program. There is now the opportunity to place a greater emphasis on marketing as part of the overall management system.

In the past, marketing efforts concentrated on passport sales. Resident passport holders were the foundation of a mailing list to which a biennial newsletter was sent. With the change in fee structure, parks has lost the ability to communicate with loyal park users in the traditional manner.

In previous years, the majority of information about state parks has been distributed through a brochure placed on racks within Montana. In addition, individual parks produced and distributed site-specific printed material, planned events, and made media contacts. Although the FWP Conservation Education Division would provide assistance, the responsibility for marketing primarily rested with local parks and regional offices. As a result, there has been no comprehensive approach to design and parks has failed to create a clear, consistent identity. This is changing, with the Conservation Education Division strengthening its commitment to serving the Parks Division and addressing its needs.

A web site maintained by the Fish, Wildlife & Parks Information Technology staff contains detailed information about parks, but does not take advantage of many web technologies that add interest and interactivity to the site. Aside from infrequent inclusion in Travel Montana campaigns, playing a role in the Montana Tourism Recreation Initiative, and participating in the annual Tourism Conference, state parks has remained a relatively low-key player in the tourism industry.

IV. Marketing Strategy

A. Mission

The mission of the Parks Division marketing effort is threefold:

- to create a strong identity for the state parks system
- to increase awareness of opportunities for Montanans and out-of-state visitors to experience Montana's rich heritage in state parks
- to increase Montana recreational organizations' participation in the grants programs.

B. Target Audiences

An evaluation of the SWOT analysis, visitation reports, ITRR Niche News, and national travel trends has led to the decision to focus communication primarily toward Montana residents. Except for the website presence and out-of-state promotion through information fulfillment, parks will continue to leave most of the job of attracting out-of-state visitors to the Montana Promotion Division (Travel Montana).

Specific target markets within Montana will include:

- K-12 students
- Soft adventure seekers
 - Campers
 - RVers
 - Hikers
 - Boaters
 - Cyclists
 - Wildlife Viewers
- Families
- Empty nesters
- History and native culture enthusiasts
- Communities and organizations interested in recreation development

Outside Montana, the continuing emphasis will be to work with Travel Montana to achieve the best results possible through packaging, publicity, familiarization tours, and other joint marketing efforts.

C. Message

Parks will create a slogan or concise catch phrase that communicates the following:

“Montana's natural, cultural and recreational heritage is experienced in its state parks, where visitors can learn about the state's heritage in a comfortable, welcoming setting.”

Guiding Principles:

The following four principles reflect the vision statement for Montana State Parks. They will guide Parks Division employees in all actions and communications with their publics.

Stewardship

The Parks Division will promote stewardship among staff and visitors. Staff will seek opportunities to teach stewardship principles by demonstrating respect for the "place" and the importance of balancing recreation with the needs of the natural and cultural resources.

Service

Staff will build relationships with the public through a strong public service ethic and friendly, enthusiastic person-to-person connections.

Storytelling

Staff will strengthen visitors' connection to the parks by making them places where Montana's stories are shared.

Local Community Focus

Staff will continually reach out to the people, governments, and organizations of their local communities, strengthening local partnerships and commitment to the parks. In all things, staff will keep in mind that success is built on local relationships, one person at a time.

D. Goals and Objectives

Goal 1:

Build identity and increase awareness of state parks and the recreation grants program

Objective 1.1: Create a marketing message that captures the state parks system and positions it positively in the minds of the public.

Strategy: Contract an agency to create a graphic identity and slogan for Montana State Parks.

Strategy: Participate in tourism, cultural, and recreational conferences.

Objective 1.2: Have a presence at meetings and conventions of the Montana Association of Counties and the League of Cities and Towns, as well as at other recreation organization and local government meetings.

Strategy: Create a trade show exhibit for the grants and trails program and participate in appropriate gatherings.

Objective 1.3: Conduct targeted outreach to organizations and local governments who would most benefit from the recreation grants program.

Strategy: Develop a distribution plan for the grants brochure.

Objective 1.4: Sponsor a significant statewide recreational event or activity annually to gain awareness for state parks and to generate strong public support, involvement, and commitment to the state parks system as a whole.

Strategy: Create a series of cultural arts festivals to take place at several parks around the state. Find a corporate or community sponsor for these events, which could occur during a time period designated as “State Parks Month.”

Objective 1.5: Participate in grand opening ceremonies upon the completion of grant projects and issue media releases that define FWP’s role in the project.

Strategy: Coordinate attendance at functions with Parks Division staff and work with Regional Information Officers to issue press releases at application time and on the completion of projects.

Goal 2:

Strengthen and enhance customer service and visitor experiences.

Objective 2.1: Set clear performance expectations for all parks staff and provide the training and tools necessary to ensure that employees can successfully and enthusiastically perform their jobs.

Strategy: Conduct employee customer service training on an ongoing basis.

Strategy: Recognize employees for outstanding performance.

Strategy: Increase web presence to recruit volunteers to assist with staffing.

Objective 2.2: Identify appropriate sites where there is consumer demand and staffing to handle additional activities. Add at least two value-added services to these sites each year.

Strategy: Investigate revenue-generating ideas and possible concessionaires.

Objective 2.3: Develop a merchandising program featuring high quality products in several price ranges.

Strategy: Research potential merchandise relevant to the parks' mission to sell online and in gift shops. Decisions to add products to the existing line of merchandise will be based upon the market demand and the products' promotional value.

Goal 3:

Balance the quality and type of visitor experiences, including day and overnight use, with long-term visitor impact on the natural and cultural resources.

Objective 3.1: Protect and preserve the natural features in state parks by creating alternative ways to experience some of the more fragile resources the parks have to offer.

Strategy: Provide more parks experiences via interpretive programs, educational trunks, and an interactive web site so that the public can appreciate and learn from the parks without impacting the natural and cultural resources.

Objective 3.2: Promote stewardship of Montana's heritage and recreation resources among young people.

Strategy: Develop a single statewide, curriculum-based educational program that can be delivered at parks and classrooms across the state and develop a promotional campaign for the program.

Objective 3.3: Create a program that rewards visitors when they show exceptional stewardship in state parks and at fishing access sites.

Strategy: Establish criteria and a "reward" item such as a pin or patch to honor good stewardship. Create public service announcements to introduce the program to the public.

Objective 3.4: Increase awareness and compliance of the non-resident snowmobile and OHV permit law.

Strategy: Produce public service announcements, visitor channel spots, posters, and signs to distribute to targeted markets and license vendors.

Goal 4:

Develop strategies to direct visitors to underused parks and to increase park visitation at off-peak times.

Objective 4.1: Work with park managers to identify parks where increasing off season use is appropriate.

Strategy: Examine FTE levels, public use levels and service levels at parks to determine what parks should be promote for off season use.

Objective 4.2: Identify ways to promote visitation to all parks at off-peak times.

Strategy: Promote mid-week and shoulder season visits by creating special events and interpretive activities and potentially offering pricing incentives.

Goal 5:

Develop strategic partnerships with other state agencies, the tourism industry, tourism countries, federal partners, tribal entities, support groups, and companies and organizations that share common goals.

Objective 5.1: Build audiences for the interpretative programs offered at Montana State Parks.

Strategy: Develop innovative ways to encourage interpretive program participation. Methods may include weekly radio broadcasts, weekly or biweekly newspaper columns, travel channel broadcasts, traveler information broadcast systems, and cooperative community advertising.

Objective 5.2: Establish relationships with key community recreation, nature-based, and culture-based organizations in order to engage their members.

Strategy: Develop partnerships with groups such as Elderhostel and Girl Scouts to create specific programs and events that will attract 30 to 100 participants. Ensure that these events are set apart from recreational events and contain a high level of educational and interpretive content.

Objective 5.3: Create strategic partnerships with companies, organizations, tribal entities, and government agencies whose values and goals can be aligned with the mission of Montana State Parks.

Strategy: Develop a list of potential partners for promotional activities and recreation grants, and for each prepare a plan, a presentation, and a desired outcome.

Objective 5.4: Establish culturally appropriate Native American events that help communicate the cultural and historical story of Montana.

Strategy: Work with the Montana Tribal Tourism Alliance to identify and develop events that share the traditional and contemporary aspects of American Indian culture while protecting the integrity and traditions of those cultures.

Objective 5.5: Link with local communities and tourism businesses to create at least two themed packages statewide.

Strategy: Solicit suggestions for themed packages from each FWP region (two per region). Identify potential partners and decide who should facilitate the packaging.

Goal 6:

Increase the flow of information and educational stories to targeted audiences.

Objective 6.1: Increase the role the FWP state parks web page plays in communicating to targeted audiences.

Strategy: Redesign the creative content of the web site to showcase an accurate and up-to-date picture of Montana's parks and recreation and grant opportunities.

Objective 6.2: Support and promote the themed packages to targeted markets.

Strategy: Issue stories about the packages to targeted special interest publications.

Goal 7:

Obtain data from parks users and non-users and the parks in order to identify where service and facility improvements and targeted marketing can positively affect campground occupancy rates and user distribution.

Objective 7.1: Obtain demographic, psychographic, service preference, and customer satisfaction level information about our current users at selected parks on an annual basis.

Strategy: Work with FWP Responsive Management Unit, Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, and other groups to determine the best methodology for collecting data.

Objective 7.2: Obtain demographic, psychographic, and service preference information about non-users of parks to determine barriers affecting visitation.

Strategy: Work with FWP Responsive Management Unit, Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, and other groups to determine the best methodology for collecting data.

Objective 7.3: Create an internal system to accurately measure occupancy rates and day use at park campgrounds.

Strategy: Have Operations and Management Bureau work with FWP's IT staff to design a reporting system.

E. Action Items

Task	Date to be completed	Goals Addressed	Responsible Party
Hire an agency or contractor to do creative design	Dec. 1, 2005	1	Howard
Develop unified graphic design for signs and brochures	Spring 2006	1	Howard, Soderberg
Printed material designed and distribution plans established	Spring 2006	1	Howard
Exhibit at Montana fairs, travel and recreation shows	Ongoing	1	Howard, Con Ed, Other FWP staff
Hire photographer for park images	2005-2007	1	Howard
Develop digital photo library	2005-2007	1	Tipton, Howard, IT Staff
Create a trade show exhibit	Spring 2006	1	Howard, Timmerman
Participate in MACO, MLCT and other meetings	Ongoing	1	Timmerman
Issue media release for application process	Ongoing	1	Timmerman, Tipton
Participate in grand opening events upon completion of grants projects	Ongoing	1	Timmerman
Issue media release upon completion of grants projects	Ongoing	1	Timmerman, RIOs

Task	Date to be completed	Goals Addressed	Responsible Party
Conduct customer service training each spring	Ongoing	2	Howard
Develop and distribute employee newsletter	Summer 2005	2	Howard
Work with managers to increase volunteer participation	Spring 2006	2	Howard, Managers
Identify successful volunteer projects, develop media recognition	Fall 2005	2	Park Managers, Howard, Tipton
Follow up on guest complaints within 5 days	Ongoing	2	Managers, Van Genderen
Develop a group facilities guide to the parks	Winter 2006	1,2	Howard
Research possible sites where value added activities would work. Prepare cost-revenue and feasibility worksheet.	Summer 2006	2	Howard, Alltucker
Decide on implementation of value added services	Summer 2006	2	Managers
Research merchandise options and prepare cost-revenue worksheets.	Winter 2005	2	Howard, Alltucker
Prepare photos and text to be added to online parks store.	Winter 2005	2	Howard, Alltucker
Identify appropriate sites for season extensions	Winter 2006	4	Managers
Establish mid-week visit promotions	Spring 2006	4	Howard
Create one new education trunk each year	Spring 2006	2,3	Soderberg, Interpretive Staff
Grand re-opening for Lone Pine and Makoshika after exhibits are completed		1	Park Managers
Create interactive web pages with interpretive topics	Winter 2005	1,2,3,4	Soderberg, Interpretive Staff
Contract with education specialist to develop program content	Winter 2005	3	Soderberg
Establish stewardship name, criteria and award for recognizing people	Fall 2005	3	Howard, Semler, Committee

Task	Date to be completed	Goals Addressed	Responsible Party
Produce PSA's for stewardship program	Fall 2005	3	Tipton, Howard
Introduce program at Parks Division meeting	Dec. 2005	3	Howard, Semler
Develop cooperative project to insert parks on visitor channels at hotels	Summer 2006	1,5	Howard
Develop a radio or TV program that will promote interpretive programs	Spring 2006	1,5	Soderberg
Establish formal relationship with Elderhostel and Scouting program	Winter 2005	1,2,3,5	Soderberg
Create new annual statewide event series	Summer 2006	1,2,3,5	Howard, Managers
Create statewide sponsorship, tied to at least one event per year	By Dec. 2006	5	Howard
Place brochure racks at County Treasurer's offices and fill with park and FAS brochures. Visit on quarterly basis to deliver more material.	Fall 2005	1,2,5	Regional Park Managers
Regional managers join Chambers of Commerce and tourism organizations and attend functions	Ongoing	5	Regional Park Managers
Create two themed packages each year	Summer 2006	1,2,3,5	Howard, Park Managers
Join key writers organizations	2005	1,6	Con Ed
Host a dinner for Society of American Travel	Summer 2005	1,5,6	Howard, Tipton, R-2 staff
Work with Con Ed to develop media kits	Fall 2005	1,6	Howard, Tipton
Produce a minimum of three feature stories each year per region	Ongoing	1,6	Park Managers, RIOs
Work with FWP IT staff to complete web content upgrade	Spring 2006	1,2,3,4,6	Howard, IT staff
Work with RMU, ITRR or others to develop methodology and schedule surveys		1,2,7	Howard

F. Budget

The Parks Division has historically allocated funds to marketing efforts. This plan further focuses those efforts toward strengthening relationships and communicating the importance of division programs and the opportunity for Montanans to participate in them. The recommended budget is \$95,000 in the first year and \$85,000 in the following years.

Contracted Services:	\$25,000 – first year
	\$15,000 – subsequent years
Parks Brochure Printing:	\$20,000
Printed Materials:	\$10,000
Promotional Materials:	\$10,000
Special Event Support:	\$ 5,000
Partnership Support:	\$20,000
Publicity:	\$ 5,000

Infrastructure development and physical amenity improvements are not considered in this budget recommendation. Money for those programs will come from another fund. Funding for interpretive programs and signs, employee training, and merchandising will come from the Visitor Services Bureau budget.

G. Review and Revision of the Plan

The Parks Division will revisit this plan for appropriateness and viability at least every 12 months. This does not mean reinventing it, but it does mean a close inspection of achievements, goals, and challenges that have come up since it was written and adopted. Many things can change and adjustments may need to be made to the focus, direction, prioritization, or even the vision of the parks. An open mind and a clear understanding of the current and forecast conditions will be critical to understanding what, if anything, needs rethinking.

V. Conclusion

Montana's state parks are gems of unique beauty whose very existence enriches the state, its citizens, and its visitors. As sources of family fun and adventure, they provide opportunities to strengthen family ties. As sources of natural and cultural education, they enhance the public's understanding of the state's heritage and ecology. As points of local interest, they provide reasons for tourists to visit or extend their stays, thus enhancing local economies. Through marketing, the parks can increase Montanans' commitment to preserving these important places. Marketing can help extend the seasons of use, introduce the parks to new users, educate the public about the importance of conservation, and tie the parks more closely to local communities. An effective marketing campaign will promote stewardship, enhance customer service, and increase awareness of the parks' amazing resources. Earlier planning processes have produced a clear vision for the parks' future. An effective marketing campaign is a key component to fulfilling that vision.

APPENDIX

Excerpts from the State Parks Futures II Committee’s “Report and Recommendations for the Montana State Park System” related to marketing and communications

- Recommendation 10: Working with the Montana Promotional Division, and tailored to the mission and vision statements on page 4, Parks Division should develop a consistent, long term marketing plan for the state park system. Marketing may increase use of parks but can also help redistribute use away from overcrowded parks.
- Improve the information available on the values and services provided at individual parks through brochures, web sites and other means.
- Recognize that marketing is key. We need to convey the value of each park, as well as marketing the “package” of the overall system and other public and private attractions in Montana. The specific resources of each park are what draws people to the parks and makes visitors advocates for these resources.
- Although the 1989 Futures Committee I determined that using the single “parks” designation provided a more consistent image for the parks system, Parks Division should better communicate whether individual parks are predominantly cultural/historical, natural or recreational parks.
- Use highway maps, web site, brochures and other means to inform the public about the values and services available at individual parks, and whether the park is a cultural/ historic, natural, or recreational park.
- Recommendation 7: FWP should develop pilot projects to develop thematic links among parks that draw a common interest, such as the Lewis and Clark Trail, river corridors etc., including between neighboring state as appropriate.
- Recommendation 8: Parks Division should acknowledge and foster the existing and potential economic development values of state parks and the value-added opportunities for enriching visitor experiences, while preserving existing values.

- Recommendation 11: Parks are understaffed, and the system is unable to maximize the quality of visitors' experiences, resource and visitor protection, benefits and organizations to share information, expertise and staff as to local communities and collection of fees. To reduce these problems the Parks Division should:
 - a) Seek volunteers and financial sponsors from friends of the park associations, civic groups, businesses, and local communities.
 - b) Encourage commercial and entrepreneurial opportunities to provide some visitor services in appropriate parks.
 - c) Seek resources for paid staff to supervise volunteers based on demonstrated need to conduct interpretive and educational programs, site maintenance, fee collection, site control and visitor protection
 - d) Continue to develop partnerships with other agencies as appropriate.⁷

⁷ Report and Recommendations for the Montana State Park System, Submitted by the State Parks Futures Committee II, November 2002, pp. 7-9.